

## Book Review

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**THE MERCK MANUAL OF DIAGNOSIS AND  
THERAPY, Sixteenth Edition.**

**Robert Berkow, Editor.**

**Merck Research Laboratories,  
Rahway, New Jersey, 1992, 2,844 pp.**

Since its first publication in 1899, the *Merck Manual of Diagnosis and Therapy* has become an important reference book of medicine. The *Manual* is published by Merck and Co., Inc., as a not-for-profit service to health care professionals. The previous edition was published in 1987 and translated into seven languages. It sold more than one million copies worldwide, making it the most widely-used medical reference book in the world. The sixteenth edition, like the fifteenth, was edited by Dr. Robert Berkow. There are 13 physicians on the editorial board, 14 distinguished consultants, and over 250 contributing authors. This edition is also 120 pages longer, with 47 new figures and 128 new tables.

As in past editions, the contents are arranged by organ system on the basis of the origin of each disease. The pathologic and physiologic manifestations of each disease are explained where pertinent. Signs and symptoms are described, along with how to elicit data required for diagnosis. Clinical procedures and laboratory tests are listed with emphasis on indications, contraindications, and possible complications. The manual, as in the past, presents clear, concise instructions for treatment and recommended drug dosages. Short descriptions of general pharmacological principles are also provided.

The book provides information on a wide range of medical disorders. Although concise, it is surprisingly

comprehensive and includes discussions on some uncommon problems for the medical practitioner, such as radiation injury, deep-sea diving problems, and dental emergencies. In this edition, several new sections have been added, reflecting current concerns in clinical medicine. These include discussions on sports medicine, hospice medicine, human immunodeficiency virus infections in children, cardiopulmonary resuscitation in infants and children, genetic evaluation and counseling, anabolic steroid abuse, cultural issues in medicine, and cocaine withdrawal in newborns. A table of generic drugs with their trade names has been included. Several sections have been extensively revised, such as those on breast cancer, endometriosis, HIV infection, cardiac arrhythmias, tuberculosis, mononucleosis, laboratory medicine, and the biology of the immune system. A detailed index provides easy access to specific topics.

For its size, the *Manual* contains an enormous wealth of medical information. However, with so many contributors, the quality of the writing varies from section to section. The user may consider a part to be unnecessarily lengthy, while another may seem too concise or incomplete. Nevertheless, it is an excellent quick reference book for the medical practitioner. It can be used in the study of medicine or to prepare for an examination. It is also a valuable source of medical information for the researcher. A medical library would not be complete without this book.

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